THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) The suggestions made by Confederation of Indian Industry to boost exports include-setting up an apex National body to develop a country strategy; greater freedom and autonomy to the Exim Bank; revamping of the ECGC and building of India brand.

(b) Export performance is influenced inter-alia by international market conditions, supporting infrastructural facilities, credit availability and policy framework and the Government is taking all necessary steps to see that there is a steady increase in the growth of exports. Export promotion is a continuous process and measures are being taken based on interaction with trade, industry and export promotion organisations.

Trade Barriers by Industrialised Countries

1233. SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether at the second ministerial meeting of WTO at Geneva held in May, 1998 India raised objections to the unilateral imposition of trade barriers by industrialised countries on environmental, labour, health and Psytosanitary standars; and

(b) if so, whether India received support from other developing countries in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (b) Yes Sir. At the second Ministerial meeting concern was expressed at the trend towards unilateral imposition of trade barriers by certain industrialized countries on inter alia grounds such as environmental, labour, health and Phytosanitary standards. It was pointed out that protectionist measures adopted by developed countries in various ways restrict market access for goods and services produced in developing countries.

During the deliberations, attempts by certain developed countries to introduce potentially protectionist issues, based on environmental considerations, were strongly resisted by India and other developing countries. The developing countries were of the view that economic growth should be given primacy in order to improve standards of living in poorer countries. Other developing countries also joined India in demanding that the industrialised countries should not resort to new protectionism, exploiting the problems encountered by certain developing countries in the wake of the financial crisis. This position has also been endorsed by the Conference which has recognized that 'keeping all markets open must be a key element in a durable solution to these difficulties' and that the 'use of any protectionist measures' is to be rejected.

Setting up of a WTO Centre by Lift

1234. SHRI DEBABRATA BISWAS: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that LIFT is proposing to set up a WTO Centre in order to study various aspects of the new international trade regime and establish a data base on latest trends;

(b) if so, details thereof; and

(c) by when the Centre is likely to be set up?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The proposed WTO Centre would be headed by an eminent expert in the field of international trade. The expenditure on this centre would be met out of the specific grants provided by the Government and the interest earned on corpus fund devoted to the LIFT by MMTC and PEC etc. The activities of the centre would be as follows:-

(i) To conduct research on specific policy related issues assigned by MOC from time to time.